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DE RUEHGD #0379/01 2122031
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 312031Z JUL 07
FM AMCONSUL GUADALAJARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0311
INFO RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 1545
RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
RUEHGD/AMCONSUL GUADALAJARA 4343

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 GUADALAJARA 000379

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STATE FOR WHA/MEX

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SMIG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [MX](#) [XM](#)

SUBJECT: INCREASINGLY URBAN AND FEMALE CENTRAL WESTERN MEXICO
EMIGRANT POPULATION FACES CHALLENGES

REF: A. GUADALAJARA 328, B. GUADALAJARA 365

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Summary

11. Summary: According to recent studies, the profile of immigrants to the United States from Central Western Mexico has changed in recent years. Immigrants from urban locales have been on the rise and the female percentage among this population has increased as well. Academics cited the more educated, independent spirit of women from larger towns or cities as the reason for their increased mobility. These trends have exposed the increased vulnerability of women and children who make the journey to the United States as well as those left behind in Mexico. Guadalajara recently hosted a regional meeting of a national women's migratory network formed to address the effects of national and international migratory trends on women and families. End Summary.

Migratory Trends: More Urban, More Women, Longer Stays

12. It is well known that Jalisco and surrounding States are leading sources of Mexican emigrants to the United States (Refs A and B). The profile of Mexican emigrants has changed, however, according to academic findings presented during recent regional meetings on migration. Increased numbers of higher educated Mexicans from semi-urban/urban areas have emigrated to the United States. Illegal immigrants have also stayed longer in the United States, as it has become more risky and more expensive to cross the border multiple times [Note: According to a regional government official, coyotes charge Jalisco residents US\$2,000 to US\$2,500 to take them across the border illegally. End Note.] Men still dominate the percentage of Mexican emigrants going to the United States, but women who have gone have stayed longer, usually because their motivation is family reunification.

13. Urban-dwelling women comprised the majority of female emigrants, as they are more mobile, educated, and independent. A Central Western Mexico study (States of Jalisco, Colima, Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Michoacan, Nayarit) concluded that the male-female breakdown of emigrants varied according to the size of their hometown. Males comprised the dominating majority of emigrants from towns with less than 50,000 residents; however, at least half of emigrants were female leaving towns with more than 50,000 residents. The typical profile of a female emigrant was a married, young housewife with children: 40% were less than 25 yrs old; 20% worked outside of the home; and 70% had children. Another recent study focused solely on the increasing urban migration from Jalisco. The study

concluded that half of Jalisco emigrants left cities with greater than 15,000 inhabitants (30% of those originated from cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants--nearly all from the Guadalajara metro area). About three quarters of Jalisco emigrants were male, with the majority being between 15 and 24 years of age. This study concluded that men still dominated the urban Jalisco emigrant population, but women emigrants were increasing in numbers and comprised over 30% of the total.

14. The Jalisco study also analyzed the specific migratory patterns of one of Guadalajara's lower income, working class neighborhoods (Colonia Constitucion). About a quarter of households had family members living in the United States, with the overwhelming majority living in California. Other significant family member destinations reported included Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico, Georgia, and Washington. Only about one third of households with emigrants received remittances from their family members in the United States, suggesting that many families are left to fend for themselves.

Women and Children Vulnerable At Home and Abroad

15. These recent regional studies and meetings highlight the plight of women and children affected by migratory patterns. Increased numbers of women and children are at risk during their travels and at their final destination, while the children that remain in Mexico are often left without either parent. Men dominate the support networks that do exist in the United States (e.g., migrant liaison groups named "Clubs Jalisco"), while women are commonly isolated at home with limited access to healthcare and education. When deported, family members are sometimes split up and may end up working in a border factory or subject to sexual violence, trafficking in persons, or child labor. In addition, significant emotional problems are created by the absence of a child's father or family separation, including spousal conflicts and mental/physical child abuse at the hands of new head of household figure once their father or

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both parents are gone.

Women's Migratory Network Trying to Get Organized

16. In May 2007, Guadalajara hosted the second regional meeting of a national network trying to assist women suffering from the negative effects of migration (Red para la Atencion de Mujeres afectadas por el Fenomeno Migratorio [Network Focusing Attention on Women Affected by the Migratory Phenomenon]). This Central States (Zona Centro) meeting was one of three national meetings that sought a coordinated solution to protect the human rights of women and children affected by migration. Non-profit, academic, religious, and civic organizations comprise the majority of this network seeking to alleviate the problems women and children face as a result of urban migration within Mexico, emigration to the United States, and transit migration of Central Americans through Mexico. This network is working with the government's Instituto Nacional de Migracion (INAMI) [National Institute of Migration] and Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres [National Institute of Women]. Quintana Roo hosted the first meeting for the southern region (Zona Sur) States in October 2006. The next meeting will take place in Northern Mexico (Zona Norte).

Comment

17. Comment: While families in Jalisco and the surrounding States receive a significant amount of remittances from the United States, the money does not appear to be enough to stop more and more women from emigrating to the United States or to solve the emotional strain on separated families. Increased female emigration seems to have created a host of new problems for family members at home and abroad. The creation of this

women's network, with the support of the national government, brings much needed attention to women and children's issues. The scope of the network's plans, however, seems a bit ambitious given the variety of migratory problems facing Mexico. Only time will tell if this network will be empowered and focused enough to take specific actions to alleviate existing problems. End Comment.

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